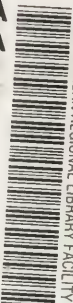


Thames Sonnets and Semblances



Margaret Armour
and W B Macdougall

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Thames Sonnets and
Semblances

BY MARGARET ARMOUR
SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH.

Dent & Co.

*A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE MEREDITH
WORLD.*

Elkin Mathews.

[In rapid preparation.]



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THAMES
SONNETS
AND
SEMBLANCES
BY
MARGARET ARMOUR
AND
W. B. MACDOUGALL

18  97

LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS

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TO
FREDERICK H. EVANS
A LOVER
OF
THE THAMES

870411

Sonnets

MARGARET ARMOUR

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Semblances

W. B. MACDOUGALL

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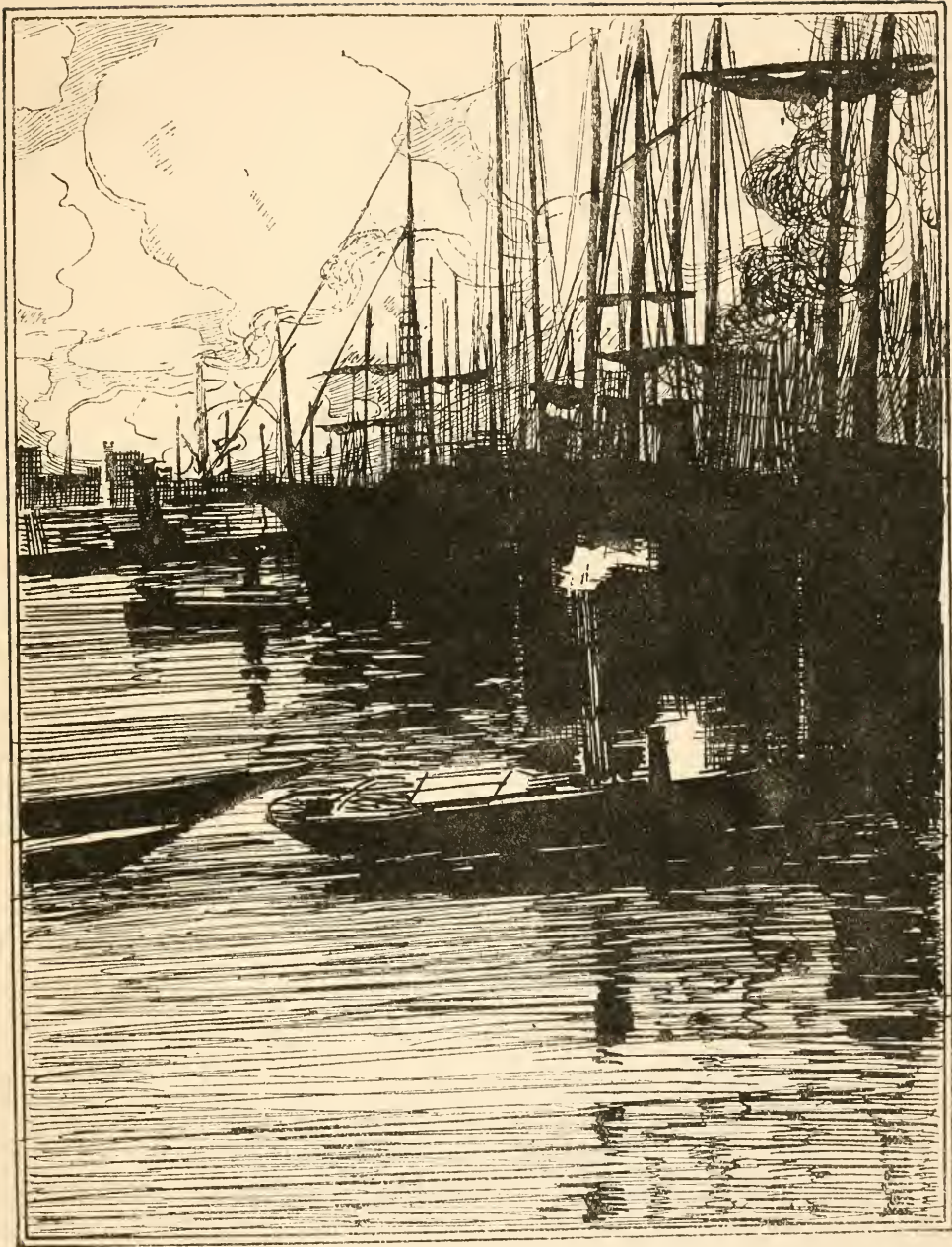
I

WALK with me, love, upon the paven shore,
And, 'mid the purple and the wav'ring gleam,
Wander away an hour of bootless dream,
Then turn thy heart to mine and love me more.
For soon the hour of loving will be o'er,
And, as the lights that flit upon yon stream,
We shall be gone, and other days shall beam,
And other suns rise radiant as of yore.

Ah, look not back! The yesterdays so sweet
Make dark the morrows that we shall not greet.
And look not on, for who shall show us how
Is traced the narrowing pathway for our feet?
Recall no promise; breathe to me no vow;
But take me to thy heart and love me now.

Semblance II

THE POOL



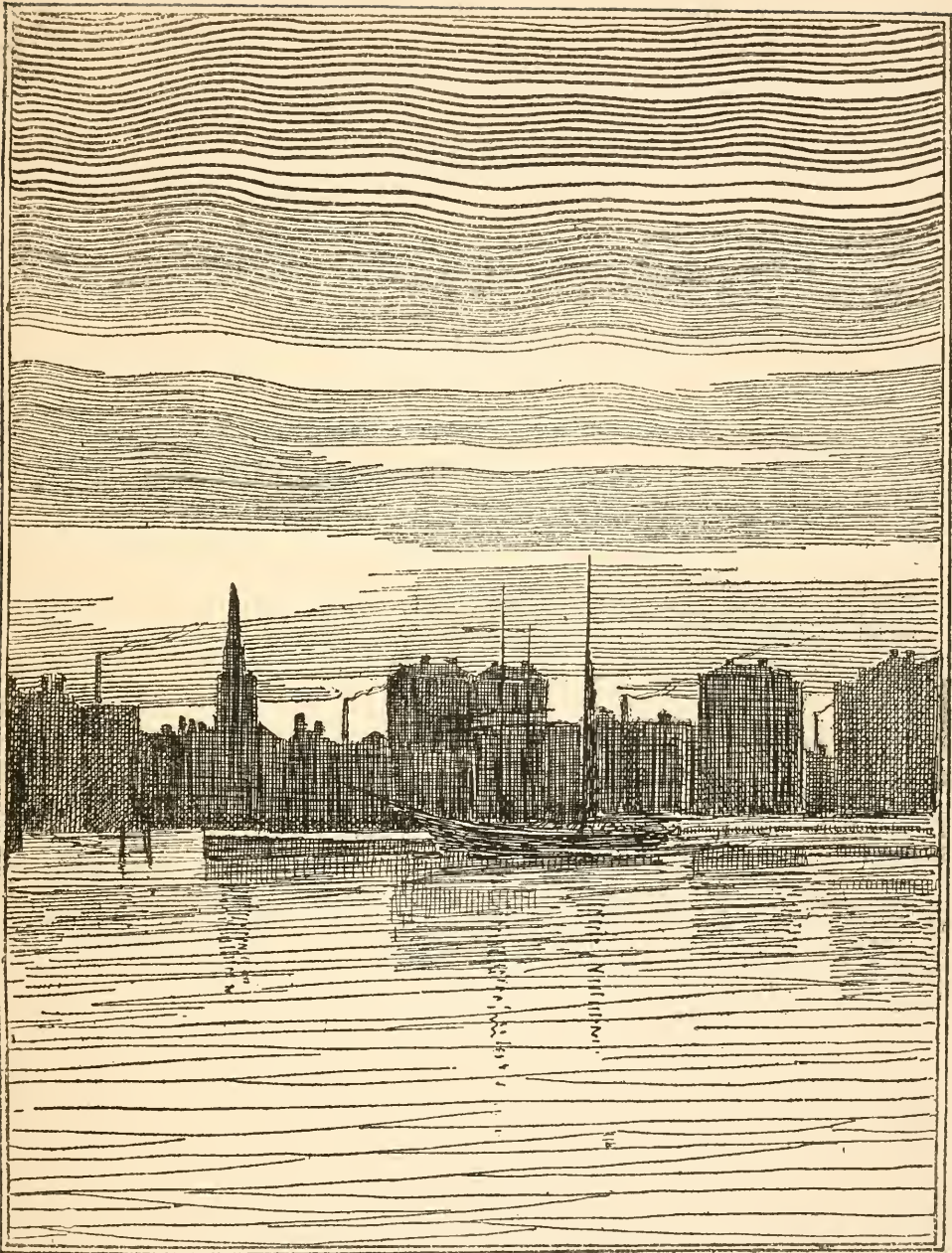
II

FATHER of cities, on whose bosom vast
A thousand golden argosies have lain,
Wilt thou yet flow dishonoured to the main
With all thy mighty palaces down cast?
Broken as Tyre's of old thy myriad mast?
Night's diadems on gleaming arch and fane
That crown thee as a monarch, sunk and vain?
Scrolled on a barren wilderness thy past?

If so, proud river! still thy boast may be
That thou dost bear to the forgetful sea
Such spoil as never yet oblivion
Hath sepulchred within her furrow wan;
And that hath perished with thy fame and thee
The brightest aureole from glory gone.

Semblance III

WAPPING



III

Now, while the wizard of the golden rod
Thames' sallow tide transmutes, and seaward flings
A purple carpet for the feet of kings,
Turn, O beloved! from the fools that plod
Earth's barren ways and disenchanting sod,
And ship with me where the blue billow swings,
Beyond the farthest waves and farthest wings,
To the old land, forever new, untrod.

There Eden lies with none to guard the door ;
There the pale asphodel that springs forget
Upon the fields Elysian blossoms yet ;
There Ilion's heroes fight their battles hoar,
And in Bagdad, neath mosque and minaret,
The thousand and one tales are marvelled o'er.

Semblance IV
FROM BLACKFRIARS (DAY)



IV

THOU art for all! And one doth truly say,
 “ Behold my river of the buoyant breast !”
 And one, “ Nay mine, that bears me from the west,
Dark anodyne for bitterness of day.”
To cynic, saint, thy waters scoff and pray ;
 Love finds in thee love echoed and confessed ;
 Mammon accounts thee but a mart unblest,
Childhood, a fairy-fleeted waterway.

Thou art for all ! And yet we watch thee pass
 Unheeding any in thy stubborn flow,
For though our moods are mirrored in thy glass,
Our proven kinship is but one, alas !
 That, pilgrims to a bourne we do not know,
 Even as thy wave untarrying we go.

Semblance V

FROM BLACKFRIARS (NIGHT)



V

IF e'er for us the ebon gates unfold,
And from the unlit world with pallid feet
We fare in the ghost-watches through the street,
And go again where we have gone of old,
Thy dear dead hand, O love! in mine I'll hold,
And pass with thee down to the deathless stream
Whose lights for us once gemmed so many a dream,
Whose wave to us so many a story told.

There, by the wall and down the empty way,
Even as now, oft-pausing we will stray,
And wake again love's music with our tongue,
And laugh again but to be glad and young,
And sigh because we shall be dead some day,
With the brown earth upon our bosoms flung.

Semblance VI

WESTMINSTER FROM WATERLOO
BRIDGE

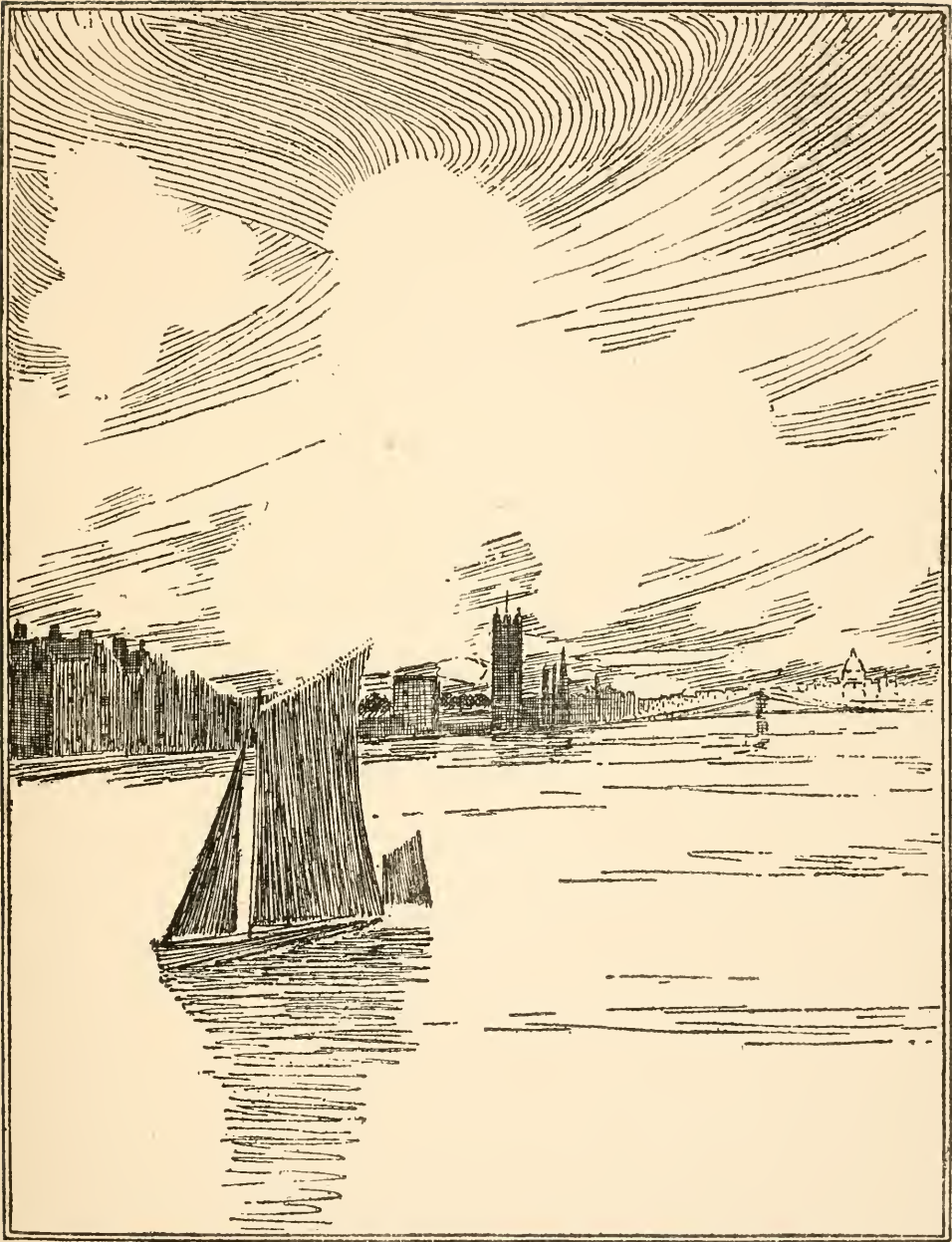


VI

I LOVE thee thus, O pale with memories,
And yearning back towards the golden door
From night's dim corridor and darkening floor ;
A phantom river rustled by the breeze
Of ghostly summers and of spectral trees
That to thy heart, green as in the days of yore,
Whisper upon the city-blackened shore
Of unforgotten hills and waiting seas.

Mine, too, this hour of twilight and of dream,
When, through life's fever and tumultuous jar,
My spirit flows unheeding as thy stream,
Half yearning to the uplands left afar,
Half to the wave where suns forget to gleam,
And Death inhabits Night without a star.

Semblance VII
FROM VAUXHALL BRIDGE



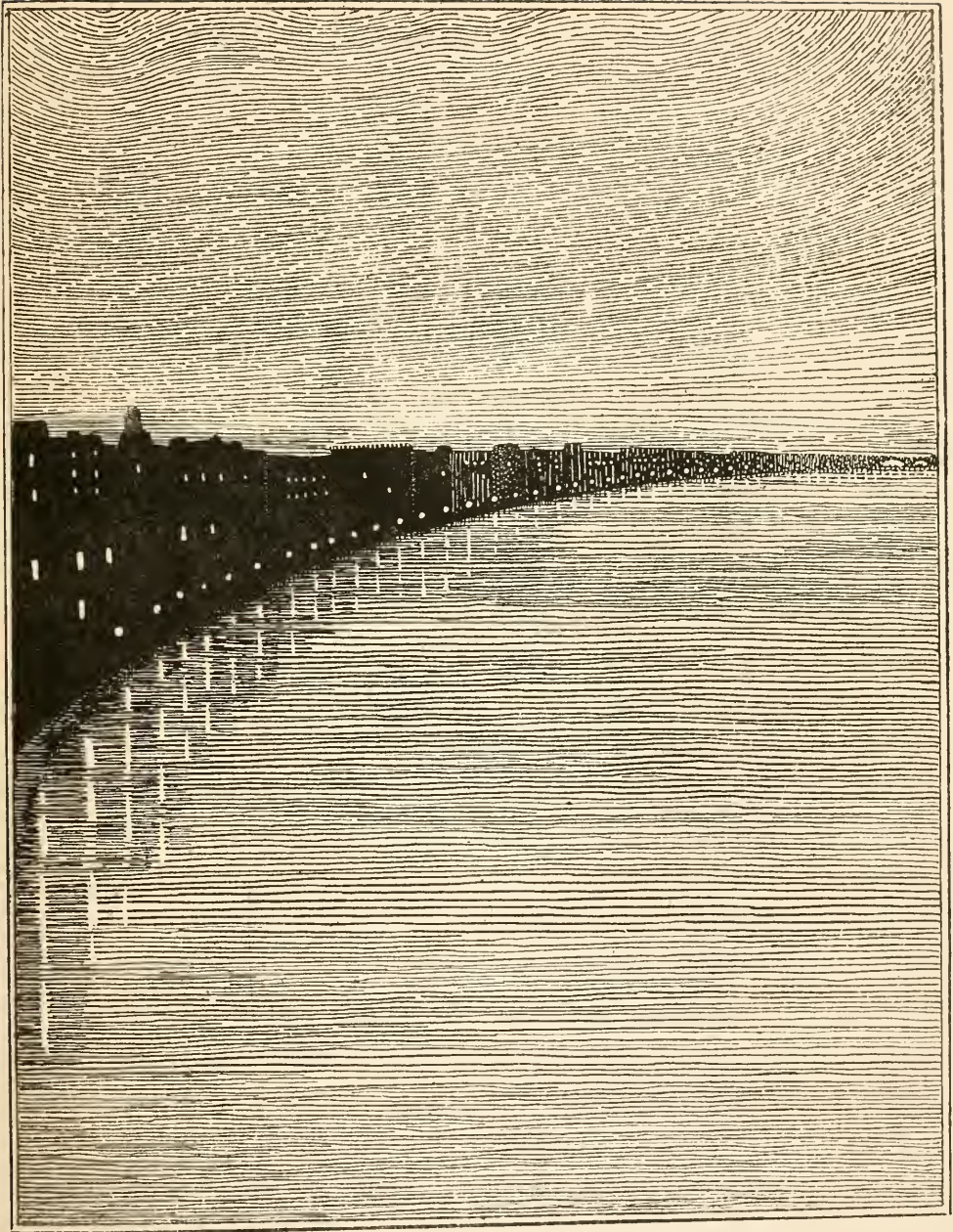
VII

LEAVE the dead past entombed in the dead page,
And to the ancient bards their impotent song,
For live grows shorter, love, and art more long,
And but a weariness both saint and sage.
Come, quench the thirst not they nor theirs assuage,
In the free tumult and the surging throng
Where the crowds hurtle and the winds are strong,
And the great waters know not change nor age.

Mark where the river of proud arch and dome,
August, contemplative, disdains our wit,
And holds the secret, sought in many a tome,
Of life and its dark riddle still unlit.
Ah, love, what classic bard of Greece or Rome
Hath spelt the word upon yon waters writ!

Semblance VIII

LOOKING EAST FROM WATERLOO
BRIDGE

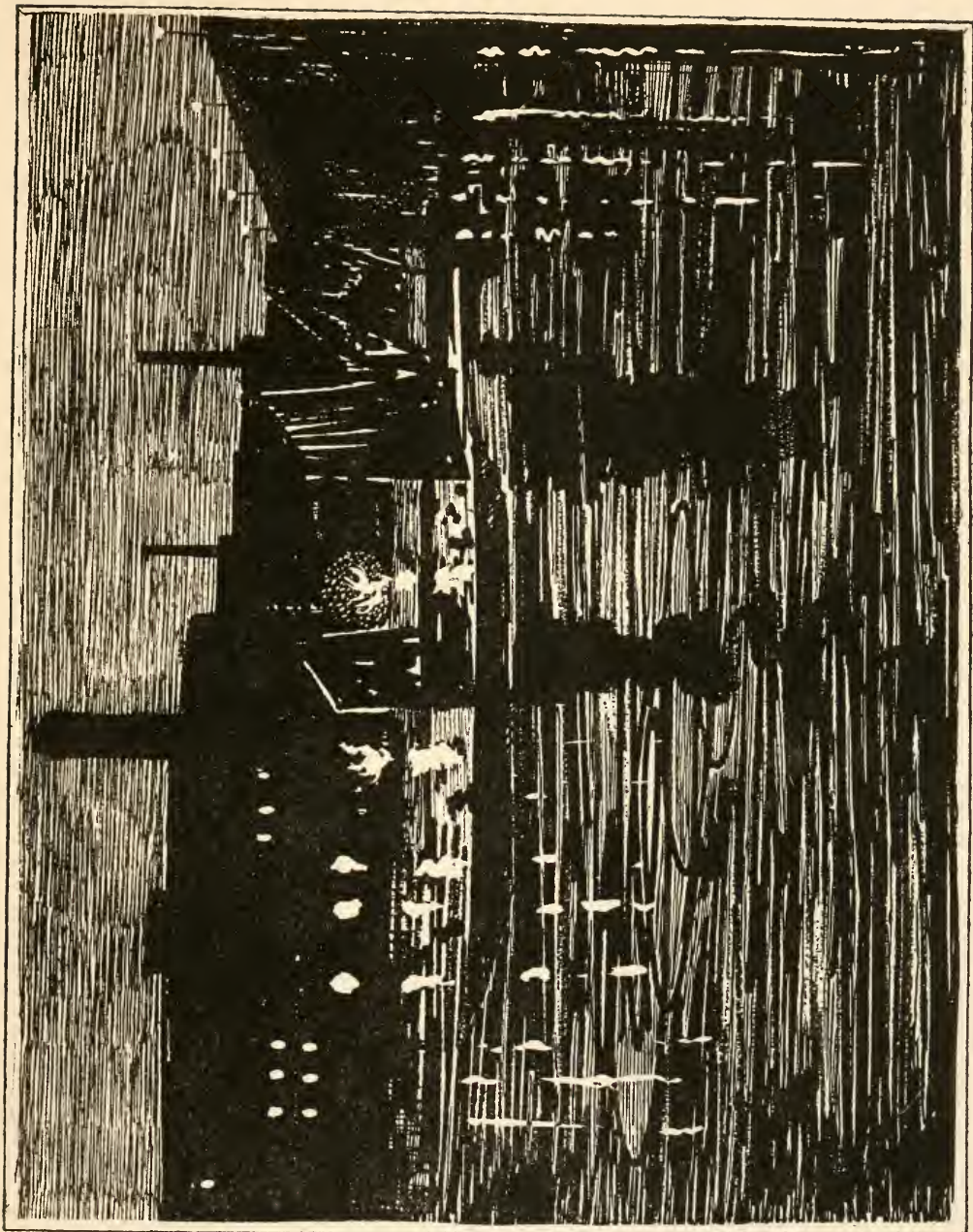


VIII

THE Spirit still doth on thy waters brood,
O river of the night divinely calm,
And fair as they that under Eden's palm
First saw man made in God's similitude!
Christ o'er Jerusalem hath weeping stood,
Yet blossom there the myrtle and the balm,
And here, O Thames! thy voice is still a psalm,
As when God formed the earth and called it good.

Unsullied by our tears the stars above,
Unsilenced by our voice the sweet wild wind,
Brave and unwarned of doom the seasons move,
And, for all bitterness of death behind,
And the strong grave, while waters quench not love,
The works of God are good and He is kind.

Semblance IX
WHARVES AT NIGHT

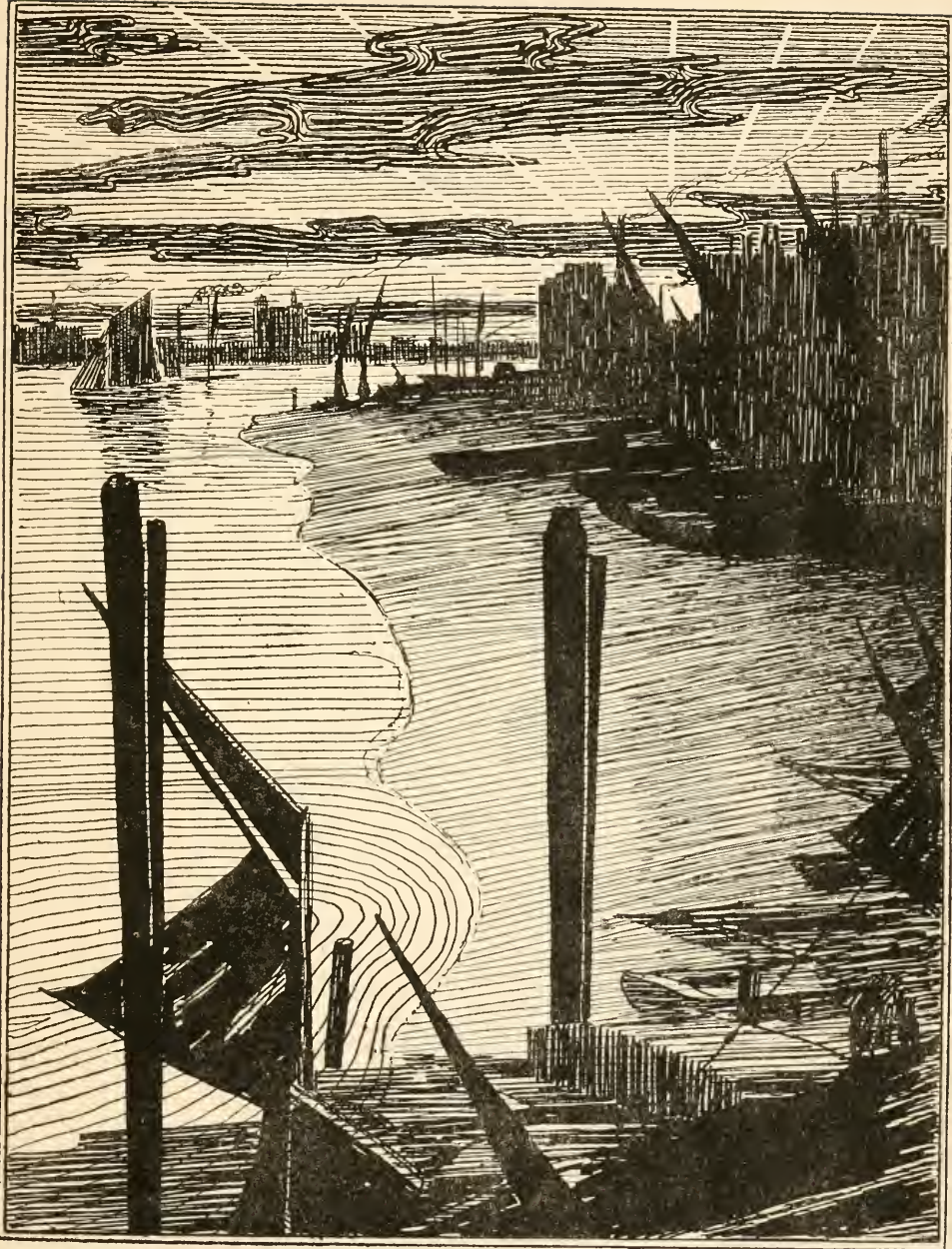


IX

BLIGHTED and baleful stream ! What wizard spell
Hath turned thy lucent wave to Stygian slime,
Altered thy voice to bated breath of crime,
Darkened thy smile to frown inscrutable ?
Stealthy and treasonous ! Of what purpose fell
Art thou the emissary ? From what clime
Horrid and drear, charged by what fiend sublime
With Devil-brooded deed too black for Hell ?

Thine arches are foul arms flung from the Pit
To grapple sinners to thy loathsome bed.
Thy million lamps by million fiends were lit,
The torches of their Saturnalia dread,
Where, with the ghosts of thy dishonoured dead,
They and thy damnèd soul in revel sit.

Semblance X
MORNING AT LAMBETH



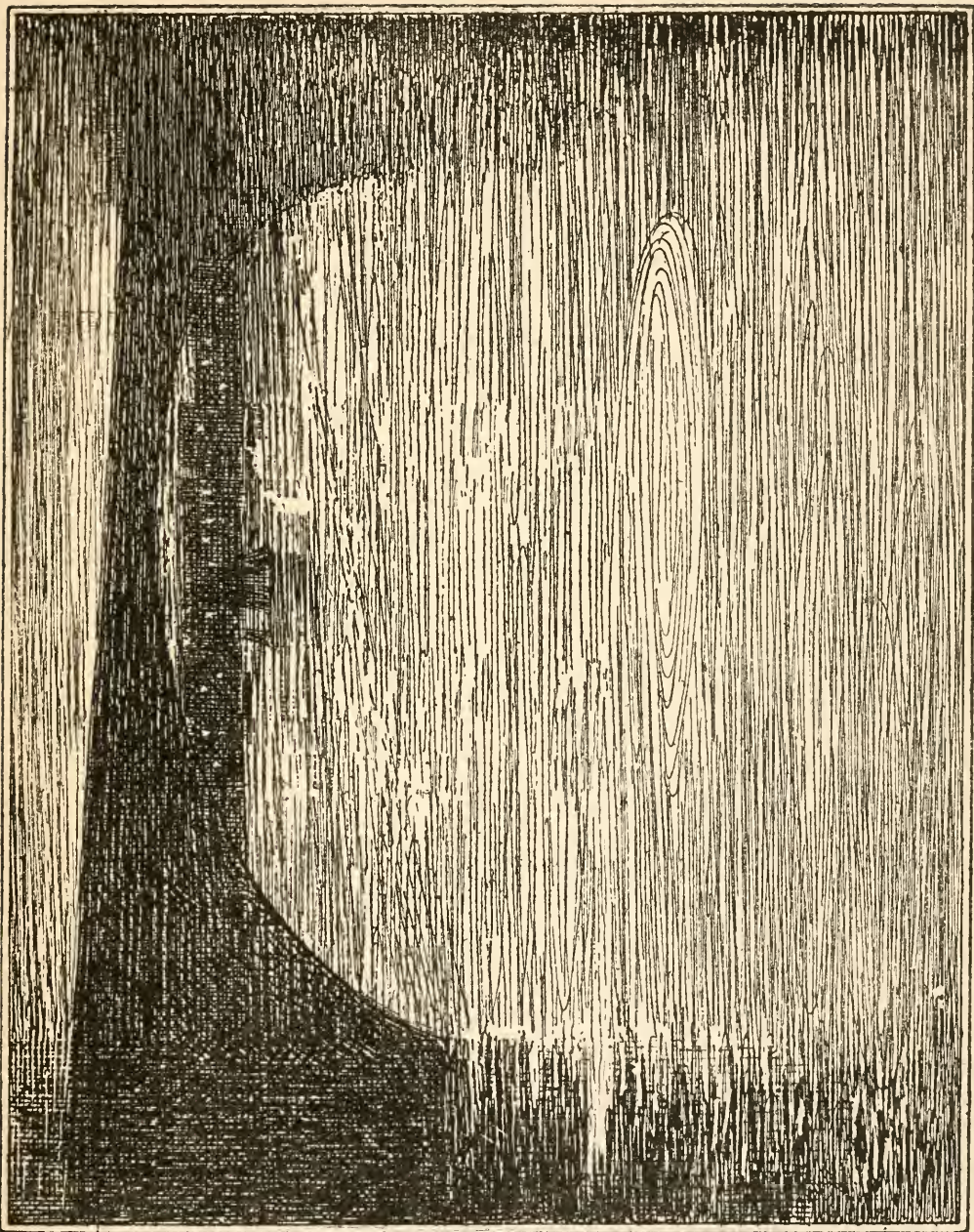
X

Lo! the night-curtain from thy couch withdrawn,
Unveiled thy sallow visage, lowering, creased,
And the rude sun to flout thee, and to feast
On the exultant freshness of the dawn.
Up, old carouser of the drunken yawn
And do thy salutation to the east,
That, haply, like some o'er indulgent priest,
It shrive thee with the rest who kneel and fawn!

Barges reptilian and sluggish creep
Between thy sullen banks yet half asleep,
And through the fog, foul-moored amid the slime,
Far boats loom out like monsters of the prime
Or blackened cairns of eld that, gruesome, heap
Horrid and dim memorials of crime.

Semblance XI

BY WATERLOO BRIDGE



XI

LIKE the tear-founted stream of Ida's cave,
That by the rueful spirit-band was crossed
In Dante's bitter legend of the lost,
To me, O Thames! thy dusk-encarmined wave.
Nor thou shalt turn again, nor it, to lave
Auroral feet; but by the doleful coast
And wailing caverns of the darkness tossed,
Bear sorrow down to an abysmal grave.

Stunned by the tumult, we therein who moan
And make our lamentation with loud tears
Scarce hearken to the cry that is our own.
But thou, a friend that pitifully hears,
Hast garnered all the grief of all the years
And made it thy eternal undertone.

Semblance XII
WAY FOR THE DEAD



XII

Way for the dead! The summoning bellman tolls
From the high steeple, and the shrouded throng
Glide through the bolted doors and haste along
Where the black water Acherontic rolls.
Ghost upon ghost twined in their murky stoles,
Lovers sweet-linked, earth's mighty ones and strong,
Sages forgotten, poets of unvoiced song,
Silent, serried and swift, and all dead souls!

Way for the dead! The night is theirs, not ours ;
Yet ours anon shall be, for by and by
Darkened shall be the sun, and we shall die.
And when the strident bellman from his towers
Clangs through the hollow night the mustering hours,
We shall go forth and join Death's company.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS
OF
SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH

Glasgow Herald.—"No prettier book of verse has for long been issued from the press than that which encloses Miss Armour's charming lyrics. Comparisons are proverbially dangerous, but one feels safe in asserting that no fresher or more melodious woman's voice has been vouchsafed to the world since Mrs. Meynell allowed her dainty and distinguished muse to descend into the arena of publicity. Certainly no Scotswoman—Miss Armour, we believe, is a native of Edinburgh—has for many years produced such direct, tender, and tuneful poetry as is to be found in the best of these 'Songs of Love and Death.' . . . There is, perhaps, no living poet of the younger generation—at any rate we can think of none—who has bettered the idea of 'The Violets.' . . . The compliment is well nigh as fine as that of Ben Jonson's 'rosy wreath.' So Miss Armour has given us a new version of 'the desire of the moth for the star,' which is beautifully imagined, and no less beautifully phrased. . . . Miss Armour writes with equal grace in a less serious vein; the delicious verses called 'Prophetic,' for instance, are a charming presentment of the lighter side of the grand passion, to which one can give no higher laud than that the lovely phrase borrowed from Herrick's finest poem seems perfectly in keeping with its new setting. It is not given to every one to wear the armour of Achilles, and a lyrist who can quote Herrick without in the least suffering by the comparison ought indeed to carry her name high in the lists of modern minor poets. If Miss Armour goes on to fulfil the immense promise of this, her first book of verse, she has every chance of rising beyond the minor lists altogether. That, indeed, lies on the knees of the gods, or rather, to speak by the card, 'auf Flügeln des Gesanges.' But even the tiny garland she brings as her first gathering

in the garden of poesy—"few flowers but roses all," we may say with reverence to her of whom it was first said by Meleager—gives her a title to take a place not very near the bottom of the list of Mr. Traill's sixty odd poets, whose number must be by this time considerably increased. . . . That her verses are not the mere amusement of an idle hour is proved by the deeply serious tone that is the undercurrent of many of them, nowhere better shown than in the first, which shall be our last quotation from a volume that must give every lover of true poetry much unfeigned delight. . . . Mr. W. B. Macdougall's pictures are thoroughly in keeping with the spirit of the book, and have both genuine feeling and decorative effect. . . . all are extremely attractive, and the artist's spacing of black and white has a beauty rare in modern book-illustration."

Manchester Guardian.—"It is seldom one meets with a new writer of English verse who gives us so strong an impression of genuineness as Margaret Armour. . . . Without the least trace of exaggeration or artificiality, the authoress is content to play with a sure and graceful touch upon those moods of feeling which specially appeal to her. . . she has a style of her own. Sometimes sly and playful, sometimes tenderly musing, sometimes profoundly meditative, but always hopeful and always sincere. Appropriately enough, the volume closes with a series of 'In Memoriam' addresses to various Victorian poets, and besides being fresh and graceful, these memorial verses are informed with fine appreciation."

Times.—"SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH, by Margaret Armour are noteworthy in themselves, and for the illustrations of Mr. W. B. Macdougall, the latter possessing many of the decorative qualities of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley's black and white, but none of the morbid suggestiveness which has set so many people against those latter. Miss Armour's muse is not commonplace; . . . such lyrics as 'The Violets,' and such elegiacs as those on Matthew Arnold and Christina Rossetti have a certain slender charm which is not too common. . . ."

Scotsman.—"Miss Margaret Armour's SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH make a volume in which the work is remarkably level in execution, while the subjects of the short poems of which it is made up are very varied. . . . these pieces are invariably graceful and musical in expression and tender in feeling. The book is well illustrated by Mr. W. B. Macdougall in black and white designs, the spirituality of which is in good accord with the distinctive tone of the poems."

Yorkshire Post.—“ . . . The dominant note of the book is one of abundant joyfulness. There are some devotional verses and some personal tributes sincere in feeling as well as clever in expression ; . . . a pleasant conceit is often set before us in a striking way.”

Bookselling.—“ . . . A book of poems, really charming verses, pleasantly turned and gracefully imagined. . . . The poems are worth lengthy notice. . . . *Love's Obituary, A Dream, Do You Know, The Inner Shrine*, and not a few others, are musical, graceful, and have a haunting melody that stays . . . one can advise lovers of poetry to buy it.”

Birmingham Post.—“ Miss Armour's verses are sweet and graceful, and are always poetic. . . . ”

The Studio.—“ A charming little volume of verses, illustrated in a decorative manner by W. B. Macdougall, whose work is most quaint and modern in character.”

The Literary World.—“ . . . We give two verses of a poem dedicated to the memory of Robert Louis Stevenson. The finale could not well be more musical.”

Pall Mall Gazette.—“ . . . Display undeniable delicacy and refinement of thought.”

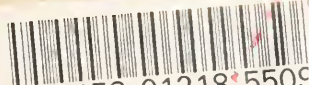






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